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WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

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SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: LATORTUE OPTIMISTIC, LOOKING TO  
TRANSITION

11. SUMMARY. In a meeting with DAS Duddy, four Congressional staffers and Charge on 6 February, Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue expressed confidence about the upcoming elections but noted that the days following the election would be critical. He expected that results would be available by Thursday February 9 but worried that the political situation would become more complicated once the results were known. Elections would not solve Haiti's problems, he said, but they were an obligatory passage along the way. Stating his intention to act only as a "caretaker" Prime Minister until the inauguration, Latortue also noted that presidential front-runner Rene Preval had already contacted him and asked him to stay on if Preval won until the Parliament could designate a new Prime Minister - a process that may take several weeks due to the likelihood of both a divided Senate and Chamber of Deputies. Latortue also outlined ongoing plans within the government to ensure a successful transition, including the drafting of ministerial white papers and executive summaries for incoming ministers and officials. Latortue spoke in depth about the most urgent development priorities for Haiti's future and a priority agenda for the next government, and he briefly discussed the implications of a Preval presidency (septel). END SUMMARY.

12. Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue met on 6 February with Charge; Deputy Assistant Secretary Patrick Duddy; Carl Meacham, Senior Republican Staff to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Ted Brennan, Senior Republican Staff to the House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere; Paul Oostburg-Sanz, Democratic Chief of Counsel to the House Committee on International Relations; and Caroline Tess, Foreign Policy Advisor to Senator Bill Nelson. Latortue was in good spirits and enthusiastic about the likelihood of a successful election.

13. DAS Duddy opened the meeting by informing Latortue of the impending visits of two U.S. vessels, the U.S.C.G. Cutter Oak and the U.S.S. Dewart. Latortue thanked Duddy and also noted that the Haitian government was relieved to have addressed the issue of imprisoned priest Gerard Jean-Juste, who recently traveled to the U.S. for medical treatment. Duddy then asked what Latortue thought the outlook was for elections on 7 February.

Elections Looking Good

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14. Latortue replied by noting his great pleasure that all political parties were calling for elections and there was no sign of movement toward a boycott. He believed that the parties had been greatly impressed by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) vote tabulation center, located in a warehouse near the airport in Port-au-Prince, and they had therefore come to realize that this election would be transparent and the ballots would be counted properly. Political parties did not see many opportunities for the voting process to be corrupted. Latortue also expressed pride in his government, stating that some parties had been convinced that the interim government (IGOH) would seek to influence the election. He said that the impartiality of both himself and Interim President Boniface Alexandre had been essential in ensuring a fair electoral process. He also stated that the presence of so many international observers would bolster confidence in the process. He predicted that 7 February would be a "big success", and he stated that it would be very important for the U.S. to engage quickly and supportively with whichever candidates emerged out of the first round. If Preval should win in the first round, Latortue urged that the U.S. embrace his victory in a bipartisan way.

15. Latortue believed that the issue of electoral security was overblown and that it only really concerned the 60,000 or so residents of Cite Soleil who would be leaving that area to go to their polling places. If anyone were likely to cause trouble on election day, it would probably be people associated with narco-trafficking who continue to profit from the lack of order in Haiti. He cautioned, however, that there were no guarantees that Port-au-Prince would remain

PORT AU PR 00000284 002 OF 002

calm once the results became public.

Caretaker Government  
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16. Latortue said that he was pleased to see bicameral, bipartisan representation from the U.S. Congress, and that the time has come for the U.S. to abandon partisanship with respect to Haiti. Meacham and Brennan asked Latortue what his role would be in the transition process and what he would do to support the incoming government. Latortue replied that he felt he would no longer have any legitimacy to enact new initiatives or make critical decisions. He stated that he would take no decision that might anger his successor after the elections. While President Alexandre would step down upon the inauguration of a new President, Latortue was obliged to remain in his capacity as Prime Minister until a successor had been designated by the newly formed Parliament. He theorized that this could take several weeks, given that the Parliament would be made up of many first-time legislators from a wide variety of political parties. He also stated that front-running Lespwa presidential candidate and former President Rene Preval had already contacted him and asked Latortue to remain as Prime Minister until a new choice had been made.

17. On the political transition, Latortue had instructed his ministers to prepare white papers and sectoral briefings for the incoming government that would outline the many programs and problems confronting the new government. He said he planned to lead the new government on tours of ministries, as well as hold leadership meetings to properly hand over issues. Latortue also said that he would be inaugurating two new infrastructure projects in the coming weeks that would provide the new government with immediate concrete success stories. Lastly, Latortue said that the Interim Government would implement a few laws by decree because they were necessary and would never pass through an elected legislature. These included a decree on governmental ethics and financial disclosure of elected officials, as well as a decree establishing boards of governors for some habitually

corrupt government agencies including the Haitian social security administration.

[¶8.](#) DAS Duddy has cleared this message.  
CARNEY